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## Orinda Library to Reveal California's Ties to Taishan

By Laurie Snyder

Orinda history buffs and avid travelers will have a special opportunity to explore the role China and its immigrants have played in California's growth since its earliest boom days when Bay Area photographer Richard S. Lee presents "Why Chinatowns Speak Cantonese" Feb. 9 at the Orinda Library. The free program will begin at 2 p.m. in the Garden Room and will shed light on the ties between California and a part of China's Guangdong province known as Taishan.

"This area is the ancestral home of most Chinese people who migrated to California during the Gold Rush and later during the construction of the transcontinental railways," says library manager Beth Girshman.

More than 60,000 arrived, seeking stability in communities across America after surviving natural disasters and the First Opium War. By World War II, Taishanese descendants, also known as Sze Yup Cantonese, were playing a significant role as airmen with America's "Flying Tigers."

"Lee, a fourth generation Chinese-American and native San Franciscan, has travelled to China and to his ancestral homeland, Taishan, numerous times and has taken tens of thousands of unique photographs."

He is also a contributor to Asian Week and Xin Ning Magazine, which is distributed in Chinese in over 90 countries. His illustrated presentation will include many of these fascinating photographs.

The program is sponsored by the Friends of the Orinda Library. FOL's dedicated volunteers raise financial support for concerts, classes, lectures, and other programs each year via their membership program, book store operation, and monthly book sales, as well as by partnering with organizations such as the Eng Family Endowment, which is sponsoring the Taishan program. Collaborations such as these also generate critical funding for books and other materials added to Orinda's holdings over and above those provided by the award-winning Contra Costa library system.

For more information on this program or on other activities coming up at the library, visit: [ccclib.org](http://ccclib.org), or contact Girshman at (925) 254-2184, ext. 15; [bgirshma@ccclib.org](mailto:bgirshma@ccclib.org).

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